

in the garden **BY STEPHEN AND KRISTIN PATEGAS**

Culinary Friends ~ Herbs

By Stephen and Kristin Pategas

The most satisfying plants in our garden provide much more than blossom color or interesting foliage. Easy-to-grow fresh herbs are flavor enhancers and regularly find their way into our meals and beverages.



A collection of herbs at Hortus Oasis

Grow herbs in a location easy to access from the kitchen so they are just a snip away. Provide well-drained soil and a sunny spot with four to six hours of direct sunlight. Do not be stingy on the water since they thrive in moist (not soggy) soil. Never use pesticides since these plants are for eating and for wildlife.

Containers lend themselves well to the growing of herbs. Choose containers which make strong accents in the garden and place them singly or in clusters to attract the eye. Terra cotta containers and a quality well-draining potting mix without the pests and diseases found in the ground ensure good growth. The raised elevation of the containers makes care and harvesting easier

on the back. Cold-sensitive herbs can be protected in place or temporarily moved to a warmer setting. Portability also allows them to be moved to follow the sun through the seasons.

Herbs have other attractive characteristics besides their edibility. The fragrant foliage makes tending them a scented treat. A handful of them make good wildlife plants. Blossoms, which are also edible, attract pollinators while parsley, fennel, and dill provide food for black swallowtail butterfly larva.

Herbs are an easy recipe for a successful bite-size edible garden. When we stroll through the garden with a colander and garden snips before dinner, it always culminates

in a flavorful and satisfying culinary experience. Our fresh herbs have inspired new recipes such as herbed pizzas and pasta dishes as well as our signature drink, the Hortus Oasis Herbtini. Raise a glass to a stroll in the garden, a few snips, and a locally-grown culinary adventure. ■

Right: Thai basil blooms profusely



A Sampling Of Tasty Herbs

Dill This annual is easy to grow from seed. For us it is a fresh addition to chicken salad or grilled salmon.

Basil An annual that is easy to grow from seed and readily reseeds itself in the garden. Look for Thai, sweet/Italian, lemon, spicy globe and purple-leaved varieties. The many flowers attract pollinators.

Thyme Will last about a year and many cultivars can be grown from seed. However lemon thyme must be propagated from cuttings so look for a pot at the nursery. The mauve-colored flowers attract bees and butterflies.

Parsley Ours usually last about two years. Select the curly for garnishes and the Italian flat leaf for cooking.

Oregano Makes a low spreading groundcover that only needs protection from a hard frost.

Fennel Bronze cultivars are attractive and the delicate leaves are used like dill. Green leaved fennel produces swollen stems that are sliced and added to soups. If left to flower there are attractive yellow blooms.

Rosemary There are upright and spreading cultivars with white, lavender, or pink blossoms.



Black swallowtail butterfly caterpillar on dill

The fragrant foliage makes tending them a scented treat.